

# **BLACKJACK MONTHLY**

## **SOLDIERS READY TO SETTLE BACK INTO “THEIR” HOME**

**Late May edition**

**Greetings everyone.**

This has been another fine month for Blackjack. We continue to make miracles happen everyday. I can't even begin to explain the amazing events which we made happen. We have executed countless repair jobs, technical inspections, and promoted several deserving Soldiers. I recently returned from R&R feeling refreshed and ready to finish this deployment.

Memorial Day was excellent over here. We competed in the Brigade Sports Days activities which included a 5K run, volleyball, soccer, ultimate football, and basketball. The Battalion Volleyball team beat the pants of everyone winning the event. Mostly because of the fine Blackjack athletes as 1SG Freeman, CW2 Roberts, SPC Nauman, and PFC Lilburn led the team to victory. LT Claros led the Battalion Soccer team. All other teams had a strong showing by advancing to the semi finals in all events, but came up short against the teams fielded by the other Battalions. All Soldiers had the opportunity to attend a performance by country music star Toby Keith. It was like MTV unplugged with acoustic guitars and vocals. He performed a song which will be released on his new recording called "White Trash with Money." He also stated he started his own recording label. It was his fourth USO tour and everyone who attended enjoyed the show. I know I did. He performed: Who's Your Daddy, The Taliban Song, American Soldier, I Love This Bar, and several more I can't remember. It was about 30 minutes or so in over 100 degrees, dusty, and sunny. Following the concert, he had a photo opportunity and the dining facility hosted a BBQ at the Warrior Pool.

While we all had fun, we all took a moment to remember those who paid the ultimate price for our freedom in particular, the 13 Soldiers from our Brigade who paid the ultimate price for our cause. Blackjack hasn't lost anyone and I pray that remains everyday.

If you are like most, you are likely to look at a calendar anticipating our upcoming redeployment after the summer. We all need to keep in mind we are still in a dangerous place with a very important job to do. We are not done yet. Typically, this is when most see the most stress because no one can hurry up time. Frustrations have a different effect on everyone. I implore all to remain flexible, civil, understanding, and tolerating while dealing with each other. While there are rumors about when we will come home and future deployments, they are still rumors and nothing is official until we get on a plane. This also applies to a possible celebration in Las Vegas. While Las Vegas is planning, it is still in a proposition stage. It is not finalized. I can't say this enough, do not let rumors get to you. It can lead to disappointments, increased frustration, and even more stress which no one needs. We all have enough as it is.

We still have a long way to go and need to work together to get this done. It is getting hot over here with temperatures over 100 degrees everyday. Working in the extreme heat takes a lot out of anyone. So Soldiers are tired at the end of the day. The heat effects equipment as well, so the internet connections and mail may slow down. Please understand we still love you back home and think of you all daily.

The Iraqi government took a huge step forward towards self sustaining by swearing in the cabinet. The Iraqi security forces are coming along ahead of schedule evident by their actions against the insurgents. According to the Army Times, the military has delayed some future deployments because the Iraqis are doing such a fine job. SGT Chard is a part of a logistic advisory team which will mentor the local Iraqi Logistic Battalion towards self sustaining Iraqi Army Brigade. This is a new concept. While combat arms have imbedded because there were combat arms battalions, the logistic supporters were not because there was no Iraqi Army Logistic Battalion. Now there is. Under the mentorship of SGT Chard, they will be capable to sustain the local Iraqi Brigade. This is a huge building block for the Iraqi Army making it even closer to operating without U.S. assistance. We are doing the right thing and doing it well. This is great news and everyone needs to know.

May God continue to bless our great country, you, and our fine Soldiers!

CPT Matt Jenkins  
Blackjack 6



**From the Top,**

First let me apologize for the lack of the April newsletter. I asked the Soldiers what they missed the most about home and what they liked best about being here. I had them write on a 3x5 card and had some really interesting responses. SGT Buff put together a snapshot and before anybody gets offended I said put down anything except family and friends.

We have had some personnel changes in the Company also. SGT Edilson, SGT Thomas, SGT Brooks and SSG Carr were all moved around inside the 426<sup>th</sup> BSB to different companies. They will be missed but will always be part of the Blackjack Team. I also want to welcome SPC Randalls, she came to us from HHC and will be a valued asset to our supply room.

As the Commander stated, I can definitely see the light at the end of tunnel. We still need to stay focused and prepared for whatever else is thrown in our way. My OIF I unit, 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division, was one of many who spent 4-6 more months in Baghdad after thinking they were going home after their 12 month tour. My point is things can change in an instant that are beyond our control. The Soldiers remain flexible and I ask that you do the same.

Near the end of next month, I will be putting together an "OIF IV Babies" newsletter and would like to get some pictures of the newborns for that newsletter. Hopefully all the babies will have been born by then. I have pictures of the Bank's, Nauman's and Schwartz's babies so I need the rest e-mailed to [Michael.r.freeman@us.army.mil](mailto:Michael.r.freeman@us.army.mil).

Our thoughts and prayers are with SSG Nelper and SPC Hogan wishing them well. SSG Nelper is in Pohnpei, Micronesia for a family emergency and we are thinking of her daily. SPC Hogan was flown to Landstuhl, Germany to recover from a surgery and will be eventually make her way back to Ft Campbell for some convalescent leave.

Until next month...

1SG Freeman  
Blackjack 7

## The Question

By SGT Buff



It's been 7 months since B Co Soldiers left their homes and of course we painfully miss our families. That is without a doubt everyone's #1 answer (besides beer). But what else do our Black Jack Soldiers miss? 1SG confronted us with this question exactly stating "What do you miss besides family and alcohol?" Many interesting answers followed.

Hands down the runner up behind family & beer were the Soldiers means of transportation. Whether they miss their car, truck, suv, or motorcycle, it was very obvious that these vehicles are yearned for out here. SPC Coon puts it into perspective by simply stating "I miss my truck. It's my life". Many of the soldiers said that they just missed getting in their cars & getting away from it all. That is a hard thing to do when you live with the people you work with.

This leads me into the next thing. Privacy: A common luxury that many people tend to disregard or give any appreciation to. Until you eat, sleep, shower, work & even use the same bathroom together as one big happy family. That being said personal showers, toilets & their own beds were missed by many. Soldiers also missed their homes.

DO NOT  
ENTER

On the more recreational side, many soldiers stated that they missed hunting, fishing, bowling & golfing, BBQ's with friends & family party's and clubs. Even if we Now Bravo is not being slaved out here like our sister company Alpha but the average Saturdays & Sundays off are missed. Of course with all the weekend party's and clubs you get to dress up. Civilian clothes. Civilian clothes. Civilian clothes. We miss our clothes.



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When your wardrobe consists of 2 non-interchangeable uniforms & everyone around you seems to have the same problem it can get a little depressing. You almost feel your identity slipping away.

And trying to feel feminine out here for the lady's? Forget about it. Lt. Durham misses wearing her hair down. Many of the Soldiers, not just females, miss shopping also.

Food was also high on the chart. Specific restaurants were longed for such as Ruby Tuesdays, Outback, Longhorns, & La Hacienda. The Chinese buffet next to Lowe's and Hooters (for their wings of course!). But the most missed place to eat was home. Home cooked meals were the #1 pick for food.

Some of the less frequent choices were pets, carpet, pavement, grass, personal church, supermarket, real milk, cable, cell phones, BET, dickies & chuck tailors, and SSG Pierre misses going out of Gate 4 to go to Alabama.

OUTBACK  
STEAKHOUSE

The next question Top threw at us was much harder to answer. The question was “What do you like about being in Iraq?” Can you guess what the #1 answer was? Absolutely Nothing.



Close behind for second was the extra money. Many of us came to Iraq with no family in the rear to support. Therefore no bills, no food to buy, no utilities, no gas, not one red cent needs to be spent if you don't want to. Also the tax break for everyone is a pretty nice deal.

A handful of the Soldiers are enjoying their new experience out here. Experiencing a new country and getting to know people better. PFC Cupps says “You learn the truth about people in Iraq”. Being so close to these people you either get to know them or end up alone. I believe that Iraq has given us a chance to know our peers better. Because in the rear I wouldn't take too much time to get to know my fellow Soldiers like I do here. You are put in a hard situation but being in that same situation with a lot of other people makes you bond quickly with one another. It's a great opportunity to make lasting relationships.

Many Soldiers like the fact that they are doing their job in a combat situation. Some are glad to defend their country like PFC Honis. PFC Banks is glad to follow in his father's footsteps that were also deployed for a war.

Bravo Company Soldiers also like the fact that they go to the gym more often out here than back in the rear. By choice. Not only are they working out but they are attending church more often & other extracurricular activities that might not get as much attention in the rear. Such as poker, MWR, & school. SGT Lewis is on year 2027 in NBA live he said back in the rear his skills would've never gotten him that far. PFC Harvey enjoys the fact that there are Philippines on the FOB.



While many soldiers are working out and playing playstation some of our peers are reflecting on life. SPC Blackmon says “I have learned to appreciate life and that GOD is by your side no matter what”. SPC Mejia says “I get time to reflect on myself and time to think alone while out here”. While SSG Nelper likes that she's securing a bright future for her children.

No matter what we miss about home or like about Iraq, it's clear that being here makes you realize the little things that never really mattered in the past. Being away from home makes you think of how great you really have it. CW2 Poisson says “Being in Iraq makes me appreciate the worst place in the United States.” Funny, but so true. I couldn't agree more.

